

AnACORTES SCHOOL DISTRICT

# Anacortes Pride

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A helping hand with reading, math  
Page 6



Green Club member Aubrey Rittel recently took part in an intertidal survey, documenting organisms in the bay between high and low tides.

## Green Club strives for sustainable world

Club continues years after initial creation as senior project

Almost two decades ago, a senior at Anacortes High School had a vision: to create change and educate others about building a better and more sustainable environment.

What started as his senior project — a culminating graduation requirement at the time — became the AHS Green Club. Since then, members have continued to partner with community organizations and work hard to help make the air, land and water around us and the people and animals living here healthier.

Advisor Victor Garcia has been with Green Club since its inception and is continually inspired by its earnest intentions.

“These kids give up their weekends and afternoons to go out and actually do something for our community. They care deeply about the future and want to make the change they want to see,” Garcia said.

Just this spring, Green Club was busy with several projects. Members removed invasive species from Smiley’s Bottom, installed a drip system at the middle school garden, sewed and then sold upcycled bags at the Waterfront Festival, participated in the Procession of the Species parade, and took

GREEN CLUB  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Graduating seniors from Cap Sante High School (below) and Anacortes High School (above) walked on June 9 and June 14, respectively. In total, 178 AHS grads and 28 CSHS grads received their diplomas and threw their caps in the air. (Top photo by Madelyn Kuhnlein)



## AMS students explore 'Seeds for the Future'

### Writers excel in Skagit Valley Historical Museum writing contest

Sometimes planting a seed is all it takes for an idea to grow.

When Anacortes Middle School seventh/eighth grade bloc teacher Evan Williamson wrapped up the class’s essay-writing unit, he decided to try to make something grow from the foundation his students had just learned. The Skagit Valley Historical Museum

was holding its third annual writing contest with the 2023 theme “Seeds for the Future.” Williamson had his assignment. Students would each write two poems and one essay incorporating the theme into each piece. How they chose to do this would be up to them, and submitting an entry to the contest would be optional.

The challenge took root, and ideas not only grew but blossomed. In total, five middle school students were awarded cash prizes for their poems and/or essays. Tara Johnson, an 8th grader who won second place in the youth essay category for her entry “Seeds of Hope and Dreams: The Story of

Star” said the hardest part was getting started. Her story wove the history of the Skagit Valley Humane Society into the tale of Star, a rescue dog.

“I wanted to lift up the Humane Society because they plant seeds of hope not just for animals, but for people, too,” Johnson said.

For 8th grader Sidra Marshall, the assignment allowed her to learn fascinating stories of local people and how successes can emerge even amidst hardships. Her research was extensive, and her essay “The History of Seed Farming in Skagit County” took first place in the teen essay category.

“I wanted to show that the

seeds of the future are the ones we have inside ourselves, that persistence and attitude can pave our futures,” she said.

“We also need to appreciate the abundant supply of fertile ground we have here in Skagit Valley. A lot of places around the globe aren’t like this.”

Marshall was taken especially by the story of William Roozen, a Dutch immigrant who started growing tulips in the valley in 1947. He had seeds of hope inside of him, she said.

The assignment turned out to be more difficult for some sim-

SEEDS  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

## Anacortes·Pride

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# Shout Outs

## MAKING AN IMPACT

A big shout out to **Kimber Cote**, our Technology Integration Coordinator. She has only been here a short while but has greatly impacted the Anacortes School District. She has helped us find a direction as we move forward in technology. She will be missed.

— *Danica Almvig, teacher*

## PULLING TOGETHER

**Aimee Rudge** is completing her 1st year as AHS Testing Coordinator. This position has seen significant turnover since I started proctoring standardized tests in 2015, and I know the learning curve is fairly steep. Aimee has done a magnificent job pulling it all together, making it as seamless as possible for proctors as well as for students. She is organized, and cares about getting it right. I hope she stays in this position for a very long time.

— *Susan Queller*

## AN ESSENTIAL VOLUNTEER

Please give a shout out to **Sonia Hambleton**, parent volunteer. I couldn't have made it through being a high school parent volunteer without her. Thank you so much!

— *Dawn Brown, parent*

## A GEM

**Chris Dyel** (AHS & AMS Band Director) is an absolute gem! The band doesn't always get the recognition it deserves. With Mr. Dyel's leadership these kids are killing it! His dedication to his students on and off the stage is astounding. He genuinely cares for each of his students and creates an environment where they thrive. Thank you, Mr. Dyel for all the years of encouragement and support for our daughter.

— *Leyna Tracy, parent*

## A VERY SPECIAL SPECIAL EDUCATION TEAM

Shout out to the special education team at Island View! Thank you for supporting our students! You are some of the best co-workers, and make ISV such a good place to be. Shout out to **Aiden Wolfe**, **Bailey Metz**, and **Caitlyn Quist** aka the best team of paraeducators a special ed teacher could ask for. Room 4 couldn't function



Sara Gill received a shout out for her work as a nurse at Island View Elementary School.

without you all. Our students (and I) are so lucky to have you! Thank you for the hard work, giant hearts and patience, the laughs, and countless memories this year! Shout out also to **Keiko McCracken** (Inclusive Services Administrative Assistant). Thank you for doing such a crucial and important job keeping our reports and timelines organized and in compliance. You will be missed.

— *Amy Kammenga, teacher*

## KIND AND SUPPORTIVE

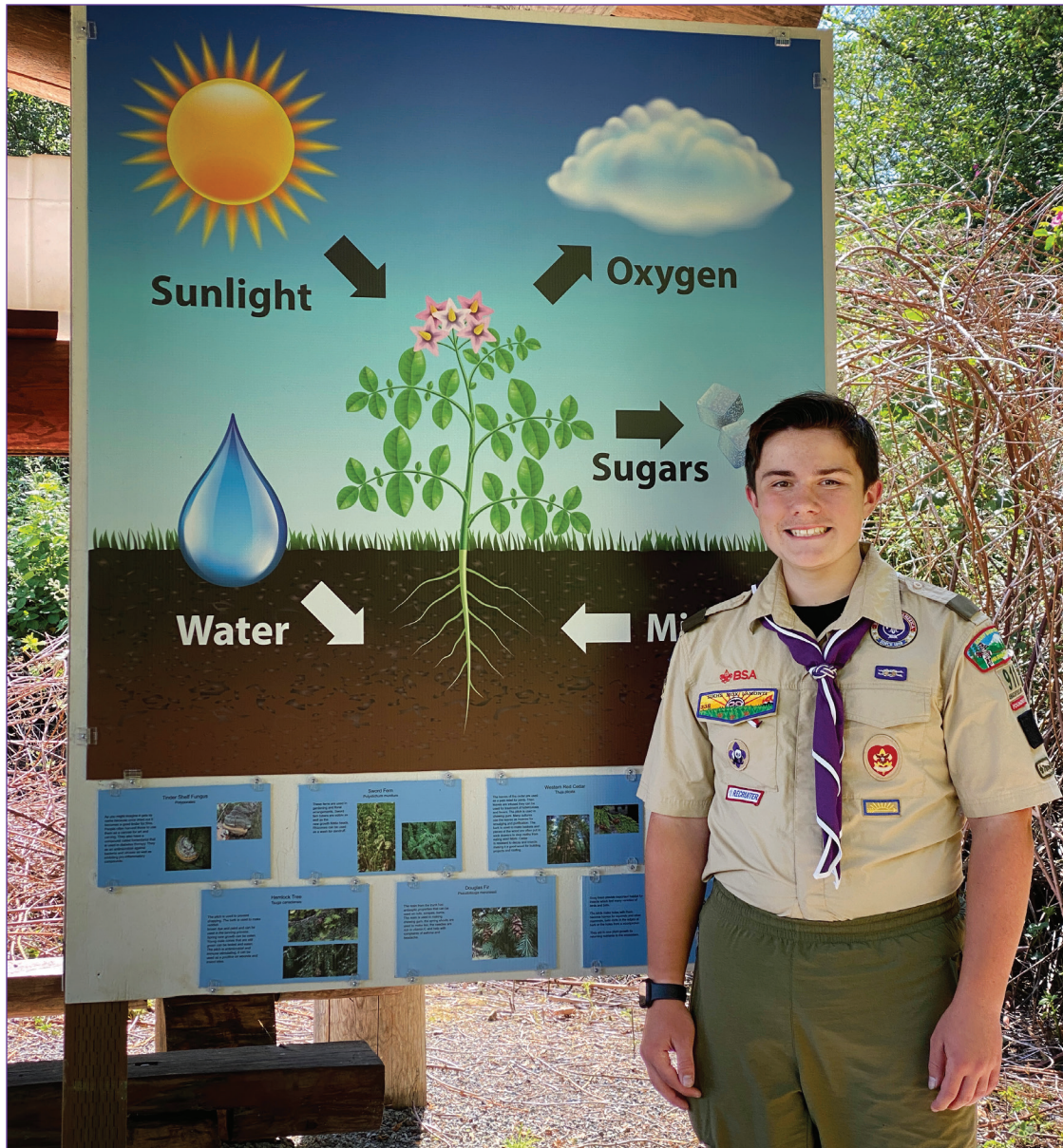
I really wanted to give a big shout out to **Ms. Kay Bacetich**. She is my absolute favorite teacher and has really helped me a lot this school year. She is always so kind and supportive too.

— *Cynthia Zimmerman, student*

## PASSION AND ENERGY

Shout out to **Hannah Katz**, our Friends of the Forest Youth Education Coordinator, for her hands-on lessons for all our kindergarten classes at our schools, in learning videos and field trips this year. Her passion for what she does is clearly shown throughout. The kinders learned so much & loved the time with her out in nature! Thank you for your passion & energy Hannah!

— *Julie Riccardi, teacher*



AMS 8th grader Tristyn Connolly recently made improvements to the Outdoor Learning Structure and trail system at Fidalgo Elementary as part of his Eagle Scout project. Principal Tara Dowd commended Connolly for this ambitious project.

## FOSTERING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

I'd like to do a shout out to **Sara Gill**, nurse for Island View. She goes above and beyond to support her fellow nurses including myself as a substitute nurse. Sara really cares about her coworkers and a fair and safe environment for all staff and students.

— *Katie Brooks-McDade*

## AN AMAZING PRESCHOOL

I'd like to give a shout out to the teachers and paraeducators at Whitney and Anchors Away PreK, which is currently housed at Whitney and working with many of our preschoolers. **Lora Billow**, **Sue Flint**, **PK Mead**, **Emmy Valenzuela**, **Rabecah**

**Morris**, **Louise McKnight**, **Danika Frisbee**, and **Rachel Omhdal** are absolutely amazing! Our students have had a wonderful year and have learned so much. Thank you to our amazing preschool educators! And an extra special shout out to paraeducator **Susan VanDeusen**. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with her. Thank you for serving our kiddos and their families so well, and Happy (almost) Retirement!

— *Katie Forsman, Speech-Language Pathologist*

## ACCOMMODATING AND HELPFUL

I would like to send a shout-out to **Mrs. Melinda Fisher**, my son's second grade teacher at Fidalgo Elementary. All year she has accommodated his needs, helped him in the areas he struggles with and recognized his abilities in the areas where he doesn't. She is always patient and supportive while helping him find his way in school.

— *Wendy Threlkeld, parent*

## HELP IN A DIFFICULT TIME

So many AMS staff have supported our student Shy this year after a serious sports injury—a special thank you to **Annie Monroe**, **Nicole Coleman**, **Shawn Flynn**, **Saul Phillips**, **Teresa Edwards**, **Rachel Esposito**, **Ashley King**, **Kia duNann**, **Karin Cooper**, **Val Holtgeerts**, **Chris Crane**, **Molly Robbins**, **Theresa McCartney**, **Tammy Templeton**, and **Nate Rozema**. We appreciate you!

— *Brian and Alexis Gentry, parents*

## KEEPING THINGS RUNNING

I would like to give a shout-out to **Ashley King**, **Rachel Esposito** and **Chris Crane** on the AMS staff. They help to keep our building running smoothly, keep athletics afloat, provide fun opportunities for our students and go above and beyond. I know this year would not have been the same if they hadn't done so much for us. I am personally grateful for them every single day!

**Nurse Annie** takes care of well over 50 students per day in our AMS health room alongside our health room paras **Nicole** and **Kathie**. Our students are always cared for and Annie maintains a calm and loving demeanor with every student. I am grateful for the care and attention that each student receives in the health room and for all of the communication Annie does with parents/guardians and staff. Nurse Annie is the best and AMS is lucky to have her!

— *Kia duNann, AMS principal*

## A WELCOMING PRESENCE

A Shout-Out to **Tiffany Barrett**, owner of the Secret Cove Restaurant in Anacortes. Tiffany has not only welcomed and hired many Cap Sante students, she frequently talks with them about the importance of staying in school and earning their diploma. Tiffany has also been very open to being interviewed for job shadows and has helped our students further their understanding and skills in the restaurant business. You're appreciated, Tiffany!

— *Jean Lungren, counselor*



Chris Dyel received a shout out for his leadership directing the Anacortes High School and Anacortes Middle School bands.



SHOUT OUTS  
FROM PAGE 2

PATIENCE AND  
FOREBEARANCE

I wish to give a shout out to the invaluable **paraeducators at Fidalgo Elementary** — **Kathryn Postera, Kathleen Diemert, Jean Crookes** and others — who greeted the buses in the mornings and loaded them in the afternoons this past school year. The afternoons, in particular, were often harried moments for everybody involved. Of course the job always got done, but I'm grateful to the paras for their patience and forbearance with students and bus drivers alike. Thank you!

— *Arlene Cook, bus driver*

A WONDERFUL PROJECT

The Fidalgo staff and I are so grateful to AMS 8th grader and Fidalgo alum **Tristyn Connelly** for taking on our Outdoor Learning Structure and adjacent trail as his Eagle Scout Service Project, areas used by our science teacher and other

teachers for outdoor learning. Tristyn replaced weathered benches in the Learning Structure and added instructional signage about the water cycle and photosynthesis. The improvements he made to the adjacent trail are equally transformational: he cleared the overgrown trail, laid trail boundary timbers, put down gravel, and replaced broken plant interpretation posts and plaques with twelve new ones. Tristyn covered all expenses through fundraising, donations, and donated labor from his Scout Troop. The scope of this project was ambitious, but Tristyn was up to the job at every stage: planning, budgeting, and implementation. Tristyn is an amazing, service-minded young man; I can't wait to see what else he accomplishes in his future.

— *Tara Dowd, Fidalgo principal*

KEEPING THE BUILDING  
UP AND RUNNING

Shout out to **Doreen Rogers**, AMS custodian, for everything she does to keep



Hannah Katz, youth education coordinator with Friends of the Forest, received a shout out for her hands-on lessons and engaging field trips for our kindergartners.

the building clean, organized, and running smoothly.

— *Anonymous*

AN INCOMPARABLE  
LIBRARIAN

I would like the Island View community to join me in recognizing **Hannah Davis**, our incomparable Librarian. Mrs. Davis is an exemplary person who is dedicated to engaging our Eagles' curiosity

& love for reading. Mrs. Davis is responsible for introducing my 3rd grader to his first school library. He can now confidently navigate & investigate the library to discover more ways to feed his mind & imagination.

— *Stephanie Downey, parent*

GUIDANCE AND  
ENCOURAGEMENT

Huge shout out to **Monica Frost** at ISV from her MTSS team! We really couldn't have been the team we are without her guidance and encouragement. From scheduling to testing and everything in between, the support she gives to students and our team as MTSS paras has made for a wonderful school year.

— *Kelsey Ryker*

District makes difficult  
decisions to balance budget

Process follows  
yearlong  
effort to tackle  
shortfall

The district is close to rebalancing its budget, after a year-long process to meet a \$3.2 million estimated shortfall. The district began working proactively last spring to balance its budget, engaging with staff, community members, and partners to identify reductions that would least impact the classroom.

Various factors are causing the shortfall, including declining enrollment, increased materials, supplies, and

similar reductions.

The district has reduced about \$3 million in expenses from its \$45 million budget, which includes reductions in supplies, materials, and operational costs, as well as staff positions in all areas: district office, technology, transportation, maintenance and grounds, paraeducators, and classroom teachers.

"At the end of the day, we examined every possible option to spare direct impacts to the classroom," said Superintendent Irish. "While we did have to eliminate positions, most staff were able to move into another open position. These decisions were difficult to make, and I want to thank everyone for their hard work and collaboration."

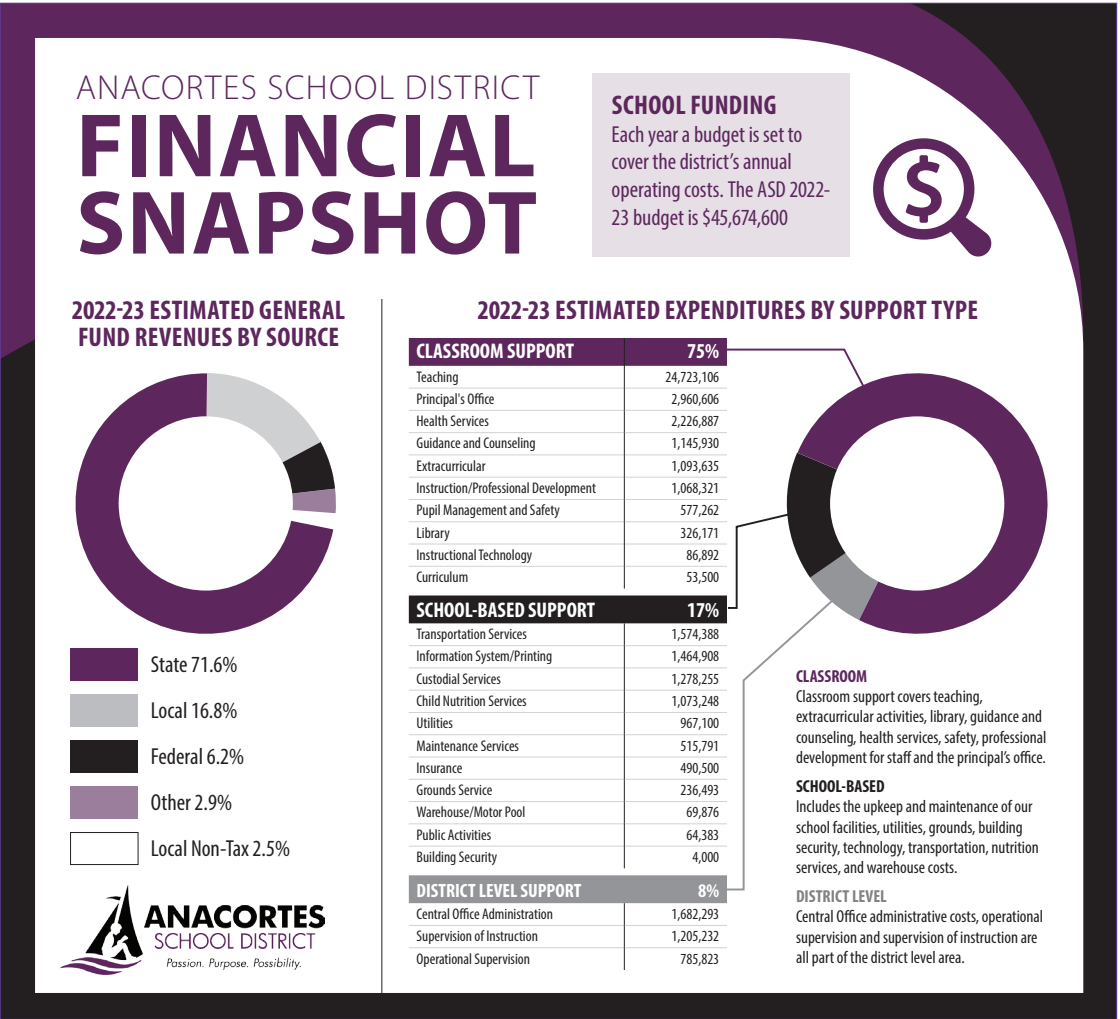
The district continues to prepare its budget for next year, taking into account impacts from the last legislative session, bargaining negotiations, and other programmatic budgets such as athletics and activities.

More information regarding the district's budget can be found on our website: <https://www.asd103.org/District/Department/26-Finance/1177-Untitled.html>



STEWARDSHIP

personnel costs. The district is required to have a 4 percent fund balance in its budget. Districts around the region and the state are facing



SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

A note to the community

As the school year comes to a close, I would like to take a moment to celebrate the incredible achievements and successes of our students, both socially and academically. It has been a year filled with hard work, resilience, and determination, and I am immensely proud of what our students have accomplished.

Our students have shown remarkable growth and progress, not only



Dr. Justin Irish,  
Superintendent

in their academic pursuits but also in their personal development. From the outstanding performances in the arts to the stellar athletic achievements, our students have consistently displayed their talents and passion in various arenas. Their dedication, creativity, and commitment to excellence have truly been inspiring.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our exceptional staff members who have played a crucial role in shaping the lives of our students. Their dedication, expertise, and tireless efforts have made a significant impact on the educational journey of our students. Whether it was in the classroom, on the field, or behind the

scenes, our staff members have gone above and beyond to provide our students with the best possible learning experiences.

As we celebrate these achievements, it is important to acknowledge the challenges we have faced this year, particularly in rebalancing our budget. We have had to make difficult decisions to ensure the sustainability and continued success of our educational programs. Despite these challenges, I am confident that our collective efforts will lead us to a stronger and more resilient future.

Looking ahead, we eagerly anticipate welcoming our students back in the fall. We are committed to provid-

ing a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment where every student can thrive and reach their full potential. We will continue to prioritize their well-being, academic growth, and overall success.

Finally, as summer approaches, I hope our community enjoys the beauty Anacortes offers or are able to embark on new adventures elsewhere. I wish you a summer filled with joy, laughter, and meaningful experiences.

Thank you, Anacortes, for your ongoing support, collaboration, and dedication to our students' education. Together, we have achieved great things, and I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.



# AHS, Cap Sante grads look ahead to what's next



Owen Kamp is heading to Bellingham Technical College to study in the electrician technician program.

## Owen Kamp — Anacortes High School

Owen Kamp moved to Anacortes in third grade and attended Fidalgo Elementary. He ranks the Fidalgo Fun Run and Camp Orkila trips among his fondest memories. Kamp has taken his academic responsibilities progressively more seriously as he's gotten older. For the last two years, he has attended the Northwest Career and Technical Academy (NCTA) part time while taking as many architecture and drawing classes as he could at Anacortes High School. He thanks Mr. Furin and Ms. Fox for encouraging and supporting him through his years at AHS. This summer,

Kamp will move to Bellingham to begin attending Bellingham Technical College to study in the electrician technician program. Eventually, he hopes to become a journeyman and his long-term goals include one day owning his own business.

## Makishi Mott — Anacortes High School

One of Makishi Mott's best memories of her time in Anacortes schools is, ironically, Covid. During that time, her freshman year, she made some of her best friends. She moved here in eighth grade, so connecting with new peers was important. Those friends will now scatter across the globe after graduation, and Mott says that's what she'll miss most about school. When asked what teachers were supportive in her schooling, Mott immediately lists Mrs. Leander and Ms. Burkland as being positive and encouraging always. Next year, Mott begins working toward a double major in apparel design and merchandising at Washington State University. She will also minor in Japanese. Her goal is to start her own business designing and making high-end fashion and styling popular artists.

## Ulrich Fleming — Anacortes



Ulrich Fleming is passionate about architecture and design, and he's looking forward to studying those and more at St. John's College.

## High School

Having spent his entire school career in Anacortes, it's hard for Ulrich Fleming to narrow down his best memories, although he admits there's one physical item that reminds him of his favorite teacher: a ceramic bowl he made in art class that his family routinely uses for guacamole. Fleming's appreciation for Ms. Burkland goes beyond his love of creating art. She inspired everyone to try new things and was always there for him, he says. He also has very fond memories of hanging out in the library with Ms. John. While he's become quite passionate about architecture and design and does plan on studying it in college, he's not ready to own that as a long-term career goal. For him, the world is wide open and the possibilities are endless. He heads to Santa Fe, New Mexico in the fall to study at St. John's College.

## Isabel Tabor — Anacortes High School

Isabel Tabor has been moving in and out of Anacortes her entire life. In total, she spent grades 3-6 and 10-12 here. She credits Mr. Rozema for sparking her interest in music; in 6th grade, she and some classmates formed a rock band and performed in a concert for their parents. And she has loved all things music ever since. She plays piano, guitar and sings and says she will never give up on her music, no matter what she's studying in college or doing as a career. Tabor is contemplative about what she'll miss, saying she's thankful for the close connections with her

friends and for the freedom of the teen experience. It's been meaningful and purposeful, she says. In the fall, she will attend University of New Hampshire to study Russian and foreign languages, and perhaps go on to international affairs, but her interests are deep and wide and she says she'll be happy with anything that falls within those interests.

## Alexandra Bielitz — Anacortes High School

For someone who has only been attending school in Anacortes for four years, Alexandra Bielitz has more than plenty of school spirit. Cheering at home football and basketball games and Homecoming week are the memories she will look back on with a smile. It's also what she'll miss when she goes to school in Canada next year. Mr. Hancock, Mr. Nichols, and Mrs. Poggie are the people who supported Bielitz and set her up for success by holding her accountable, pushing her, and inspiring her. At the University of Victoria, Bielitz will take a combined program of biology/psychology to start the trek toward medical school.

## Xavier Pateli — Anacortes High School

When Xavier Pateli moved from California his sophomore year, he wasn't sure what to expect. What he found was acceptance and an overall positive experience. And it's gotten better each year. Joining the baseball team was a big part of fitting in, although he says all of his teachers have been helpful.



Isabel Tabor will study Russian and foreign languages at the University of New Hampshire as she explores opportunities for the future.



Alexandra Bielitz will continue on to the University of Victoria to study biology and psychology.

Mr. Welk and Mr. Dickison, in particular, were easy to talk to and pushed him to work hard. Pateli's plans for the future include either playing baseball at Bellevue or Skagit Valley College. But he also loves to work with his hands and could end up in the electrician or automotive line of work.

## Sarafina Dunlap- Anacortes High School

Valedictorian Sarafina Dunlap is grateful to have completed her schooling in Anacortes. While she attended Kindergarten through second grade at Anacortes, she moved to Sedro-Woolley from third through sixth grade. When she returned, she was so happy to be back that she vividly remembers sitting in an IEP meeting at the beginning of her seventh grade year, telling everyone around the table how much she loved them. Her favorite classes have always been the choir classes and she appreciates how Ms. Leander always gave her time to express herself and laugh with her classmates. One source of pride for Dunlap is that she started her own Mulholland Squad, a fan club of all things Mulholland. Next year, she will attend Central Washington University to study media and journalism with a minor in music. In the long run, Dunlap hopes to be an editor.



Sarafina Dunlap will attend Central Washington University to study media and journalism, and she hopes to become an editor.



Makishi Mott hopes to become a high-end fashion designer as she goes on to study at Washington State University.



Xavier Pateli plans to play baseball and may study to be in the electrician or automotive field after high school.



SENIORS  
FROM PAGE 4



Nick Stanforth is already studying at Northwest Carpenter's Institute to fulfill his dream of being an entrepreneur and flipping houses.



Samantha Hernandez plans to enter the funeral sciences program at the Lake Washington Institute of Technology.



Chloe Moon plans to study business at a two-year school, potentially to work in real estate or cosmetology.

Nick Stanforth —  
Anacortes High School

Nick Stanforth knows exactly what he wants to do, both short term and in the long run. And he's well on his way. He moved to Anacortes in third grade and attended both Fidalgo and Island View

Elementary Schools. Mountain School tops the list of best times hands-down, he says. He gained his love for literature from Mrs. Graham who pushed him academically and says that Mr. Fountain and Mr. Dickson were always there for him. Stanforth has begun a program at Northwest Carpenter's

Institute (NWC) that will not only teach him the carpentry skills he needs to fulfill his dream, but will allow him to work under a contractor and be paid while learning. Eventually, Stanforth will use those skills and his panache for entrepreneurship to flip houses.

Samantha Hernandez —  
Cap Sante High School

One of Samantha Hernandez's fondest memories is of the Fun Run in elementary school. Actually, two of them. Hernandez attended both Island View and Mt. Erie and says the feeling of

community when everyone comes together to cheer each other on is really special. It's one of things she's going to miss most: the emotional support and encouragement of the staff who helped her through the years. One fun fact about Hernandez is that she has attended every building in the district with the exception of Fidalgo. Next year, she will begin the funeral sciences program at the Lake Washington Institute of Technology. Her interests lie in the science part mostly, but when she's finished she will know everything from planning a service to running a business.

Chloe Moon —  
Cap Sante High School

When Chloe Moon thinks back on her 13-plus years in Anacortes schools, starting with Whitney preschool, she is grateful for opportunities like Camp Orkila where she got to know kids from other schools. She is also thankful for many amazing teachers, but one in particular gave Moon hope and a reason to push through difficult times by making sure Moon gave her best effort always: Mrs. Turpin. Next year, Moon will study business at a two-year school. After that, she is not entirely sure what she'll do, although she'd love to get into real estate or cosmetology. One thing she is sure of is that she wants flexibility with her future.



AHS's Valedictorians and Salutatorians (top to bottom, left to right): Will McClintock, Hamilton Hunt, Noah Dunham, Isaac Briefer, McKernan Boland, Gessica Oliver, Kaleb Lamphiear, Ethan Miller, Genevieve Kochel, Abigail Goodwin, Lauren Rudge, Ashley Millegan, Sarafina Dunlap, Emily Hackstadt and Reese Illston (not pictured: Ryker Klufft).

SEEDS

FROM PAGE 1

ply because it was so wide open. Williamson was pleased with how his students rose to the occasion. "The goal was for them to explore and poke around, and to have conversations with humans. It's important for students to develop the ability to be comfortable with ambiguity. They had an uncomfortable, and novel, amount of

choice here, and they each took it in unique directions," Williamson said. Another advantage for those who participated in the contest was writing for an authentic audience. There's merit in risk-taking, Williamson said. "Sometimes the real world can be harsh, but getting validation from outside [the classroom setting] can be very gratifying," Williamson said.



AMS 8th grader Sidra Marshall received a first-place award in the Skagit Valley Historical Museum's annual writing contest for her essay "The History of Seed Farming in Skagit County." 8th grader Tara Johnson won second place for her essay "Seeds of Hope: The Story of Star," which wove the history of the Skagit Valley Humane Society with the tale of a rescue dog.

Anacortes Middle School Winners

- Youth Essay Category**  
**1st place:** Lily Sziebert — "Sensible Seeds for the Future"  
**2nd place:** Tara Johnson — "Seeds of Hopes and Dreams: The Story of Star"
- Teen Essay Category**  
**1st place:** Sidra Marshall — "The History of Seed Farming in Skagit County"  
**2nd place:** Amelia Zustiak — Untitled — Essay on the Anacortes Museum
- Teen Poetry Category**  
**2nd place:** Kate Scheenstra — Untitled poem that begins "A woman sits..."



# Volunteers bring math, reading support

## Mustang Buddies, Eagle Readers programs provide help

Getting extra help in reading and math at Mt. Erie and Island View Elementary became a bit easier thanks to the return of volunteers.

Multi-tiered support systems (MTSS) coordinators Kim Peters and Monica Frost set up Mustang Buddies and Eagle Readers, respectively, and have seen great success across the board.

At Mt. Erie, Anacortes High School volunteers have visited every Thursday after school since November to work with 3rd through 5th graders. Each student was paired with the same buddy every week to foster a stronger relationship. Originally, students were chosen based on the School Improvement Plan (SIP), but the program became so popular that Peters opened it up to additional students based on teacher input.

Freshman Qiamo Yang has been a buddy to fifth grader Marissa Zamora all year. Yang helps Zamora with math homework and sometimes they play skill-building games or just read to each other. Yang

has seen marked improvement in Zamora and said she [Yang] will definitely be a Mustang Buddy again next year. Zamora loved staying after school each Thursday to work with her high school buddy.

"At first it was kind of intimidating, but now I'm comfortable, and it's a lot of fun. The best part is getting to hang out with teenagers," Zamora said.

Peters said the benefits were threefold.

"Highschoolers have enjoyed the opportunity to work with the younger kids while earning volunteer hours, especially if they're a Mt. Erie alum. Families appreciated the homework help, which freed up their evenings. And our Mt. Erie students loved making connections with the high schoolers and looked forward to seeing them each week," Peters said.

On early-release Wednesdays, Mt. Erie third grade students got reading help through Mustang Wednesdays, another MTSS coordinated program, targeting third graders. With help from paraeducators, students



Cap Sante sophomore Frankie Roberts reads with Mt. Erie third-grader Madison Partna. The "reading buddies" program pairs high schoolers with elementary students to expand their reading and vocabulary skills.

receive one-on-one reading fluency practice in addition to building reading foundational, language and vocabulary skills through an online program (Lalilo).

Similarly, Eagle Wednesdays at Island View offer targeted math skills help to fourth and fifth grade students. Paraeducators work with teacher-recommended students on individual goals and skill building. Fifth grader

Wacie Whitten said working with a paraeducator every week helped her with equations, fractions and word problems.

"It's easy for me now. If I hadn't gone to Eagle Wednesdays, I'd still be confused, but they helped me so much it made a lot of my math easy now," Whitten said. "My favorite part was getting a high five or some gummy bears when I did well on a big word problem."

The two Wednesday after school programs began in February of this year. MTSS coordinator Monica Frost said teacher feedback was very positive.

"They noticed students engaged more in classroom participation, were better able to work independently, and were more confident overall," Frost said.

Finally, some kindergarten through third grade students are benefitting,

once or twice weekly, from volunteer Eagle Readers, a before-school program that pairs community volunteers with primary students who need individualization. The program targets the specific skills that each student needs to work on. For some students, simply being read to is a novelty they don't often get at home. Frost said the return of volunteers to the schools has made a huge difference.

"It's been incredible. Not only have the kids made considerable improvement in reading and vocabulary, they've gained other valuable skills such as talking to adults or discovering new interests," Frost said.

The programs concluded at the end of May, but Frost said volunteers will be needed next fall. Contact Monica Frost at [mfrost@asd103.org](mailto:mfrost@asd103.org) or Kim Peters at [kpeters@asd103.org](mailto:kpeters@asd103.org) for more information.



# ASD staff look to retirement and beyond



Fidalgo paraeducator Jesse Robles plans to take a Master Gardener course in his retirement. He will miss the connections made with staff and students.

## Jesse Robles

Known to the staff of Fidalgo Elementary as "the spirit of the school," Jesse Robles did a bit of everything. Hired as a paraeducator six years ago, Robles, who worked with Title Math students, got his emergency substitution certification and eventually filled in wherever needed. For a while he even pitched in with landscaping and mowing. And you can add percussionist to the list as he was sometimes seen as a backup drummer for school assemblies or concerts.

Originally from Fresno, California, Robles entered the military not long after graduating high school. His career with the Navy allowed him to travel with many squadrons on many ships all over the world, including Spain, Japan, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and up and down the east coast. He finished out his 30 year career in Oak Harbor and decided to remain in the Pacific Northwest permanently.

Having always been interested in becoming a chef, he then went to culinary school and got a job at Calico Cupboard. An injury halted this new career, but with a wife and daughter both in the teaching profession, it was a

natural transition to step into working at Fidalgo when a position became available.

Robles made connections with kids. From crafting individual handshakes, to teaching military chants (songs), he went out of his way to make sure students knew he cared about them. Colleague Zee Sheriff says the Fidalgo staff will miss Robles' professionalism and dedication to his work, his kindness, and his thoughtfulness for every student and staff member.

"In all the years I have worked with him, I have especially appreciated how he studied each and every lesson several days ahead before it was taught to students. This preparation allowed him to be ready and feel equipped to provide high quality academic support to students and inspire them to be successful learners. He has a great ability to connect with students both in class and outside on the playground," Sheriff said.

And he's going to miss those connections. It's what he loved most about his job. He also loved working with a wonderful staff. "We're really like a family, and we look out for each other," Robles said.



Danica Almvig retires after a 35-year teaching career, 27 with Anacortes. She looks forward to traveling and time with family in her retirement.

Not one to sit still, Robles' plans for retirement include taking the Master Gardener course through Washington State University Extension and spending time with his family, particularly, his new grandbaby.

## Danica Almvig

For all but five of her 27 years in Anacortes School District, Danica Almvig worked at Fidalgo Elementary. For three years, she was a district Tech Coach. She then spent a year at Island View and a year with the district's online program during Covid. For a few years, she also coached middle school basketball, but she finished off her teaching career (35 years in total) back in Fidalgo and was beyond thrilled to end "at home."

A graduate of Eastern Washington University, Almvig grew up in Prosser and spent a few years as an administrative assistant before going back and getting her teaching certificate. Both of her parents were teachers, so it wasn't a complete surprise when she made it her career.

When colleague Kathryn

Postera first met Almvig years ago, she was initially struck by Almvig's bubbly personality and signature pink outfits. It's one of the things Postera will miss when Almvig retires.

"She has molded lifelong learners and inspired in them the love of learning. Her dedication to her profession spans generations," Postera said.

In addition to missing her colleagues whom she considers family, Almvig is most going to miss her students. "They constantly keep me on my toes and make me laugh. And it's so much fun to watch them grow leaps and bounds over the course of the year," she said.

Almvig is looking forward to spending more time with family, which includes her husband, her kids and two grandchildren, and her parents. She's also excited to do more sailing and traveling with her new free time.

## Jeff Holtgeerts

When Jeff Holtgeerts looks back on his 35 years of teaching at Anacortes High School, he counts his biggest legacy as his own three children and all they contributed to the high school when they attended. It wasn't until his sophomore year at Seattle Pacific University that Holtgeerts realized he wanted to go into teaching. He'd always

RETIREES  
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Jeff Holtgeerts retires after teaching at Anacortes High School for 35 years. Holtgeerts will be remembered for his consistency, and dedication to his students.



RETIREES  
FROM PAGE 6

had the desire to coach basketball and teaching math struck him as a perfect companion to coaching.

A Mariner High School graduate, Holtgeerts did end up coaching AHS volleyball and boys basketball for a decade. And in addition to teaching math, he taught physics and computer science. Over the years, his job allowed him some rare opportunities and memorable experiences, including taking his students to see Stephen Hawking at University of Washington, meeting a few astronauts and visiting with one of the godfathers of string theory.

For Holtgeerts, the best part of the job is helping students navigate through all the changes that happen during the high school years. He simply loved being around students. Colleague Brian Backman feels fortunate to have worked with Holtgeerts for three decades.

“He’s been the model of consistency when it comes to helping students learn math, physics, and technology. His dedication to lifelong learning, to his family, and to our school has always inspired those of us on the AHS staff. His wisdom and his example have made us all better teachers and better people,” Backman said.

Holtgeerts takes great pride in his involvement with the math team, coaching four individual state champions over the years. Interactions with students and the sense of family among staff are what he will miss most. Being married to a teacher in the same district was a beautiful benefit to his family life, too. Now, two of his three children are also teachers, and Holtgeerts plans to spend a lot of time with his kids and two grandchildren, along with fixing up his very old house.

**Terri Kaltenbach**

Terri Kaltenbach has come full circle in her career. Starting as a special education kindergarten teacher, her career of four decades includes being a high school teacher, assistant principal, high school principal and finally a return to her first love: teaching special education. She spent eight years in Chicago and 26 years in Marysville before coming to Anacortes five years ago.

Kaltenbach grew up outside Chicago and earned a BA from Michigan State University. She earned her first Master’s degree in Behavior Disorders and Learning Disabilities from Northern Illinois University and her second Master’s degree in Teaching from Western Washington University. Although her roots are midwestern, she considers herself a Pacific Northwesterner and plans to remain here in Washington indefinitely -- when she’s not traveling to Europe or visiting her four

children, who live up and down the west coast.

Teaching special education is Kaltenbach’s first and true love. The absolute best part of the job is the growth students make from freshman year to graduation. “They become really cool human beings,” she said.

Colleague April Lyons-Dixon praises Kaltenbach for always teaching the students who needed the most love.

“Now it’s her turn to be the student as she plans to learn Italian, master the bagpipes and create the perfect pie crust,” Dixon said.

**Sheila Lloyd**

Sheila Lloyd hails from the west coast, having grown up the better part of childhood in northern California and Bellingham. But her high school years were spent in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. After high school, Lloyd spent almost two years in the Canadian Reserves in Shil, Manitoba before returning to the west coast.

For many years, Lloyd was a bartender, both in Bellingham and here in Anacortes at Charlie’s by the ferry dock. Ten years ago, she started working as a custodian for Mt. Erie Elementary and, with the exception of a brief leave of absence, worked there for a decade.

Fellow custodian Kevin Graham said he learned a lot from Lloyd.

“She cared about both the kids and the building and took great pride in making sure this was a safe, clean place for students and staff to learn and work,” said Graham.

Lloyd fondly recalls one time when she was doing her rounds, she went into the girls’ bathroom to find a few girls washing paint brushes in the sink. They looked up and immediately said, “Don’t worry, Miss Sheila, we’ll clean up our mess.”

Lloyd is going to miss the “awe-



Teaching special education has been Terri Kaltenbach’s first love, as she ends a 39-year career in education. She has enjoyed watching students grow over the years.

some awesome” Mt. Erie staff whom she says are very caring and appreciative. She is already enjoying her free time and has started gardening as a new hobby.

**Dr. Kitt Westbeld**

After six years in our district, Dr. Kitt Westbeld is going home. To Texas. But she’s taking the long way. Born and raised outside Houston in LaPorta, Texas, Westbeld spent most of her career as a school psychologist in the Phoenix area of Arizona. She earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from University of Houston at Clear Lake and her PhD from Capella University.

Westbeld moved to Washington when her husband’s job required a transfer. She has worked as the school psychologist at the secondary level ever since, serving Anacortes Middle School, Anacortes High School and Cap Sante High School. AMS Principal Kia duNann said Westbeld was a huge contributor to the staff in



Dr. Kitt Westbeld has served as school psychologist at our secondary schools for the past six years. She will miss talking with students and helping them get what they need to be academically and life-ready.



Sheila Lloyd retires after 10 years of serving as custodian at Mt. Erie Elementary. She will miss Mt. Erie’s caring and appreciative staff.

supporting the needs of their students.

“Dr. Kitt has years of experience and wisdom to offer and provides leadership, support, and guidance where needed. She is always willing to problem solve and troubleshoot how best to support a staff member or a student and will be greatly missed at AMS,” duNann said.

Westbeld loves her job and can’t imagine doing anything else. She said it’s rewarding to help students get what they need to be academically and life-skill proficient and that she’ll really miss talking with families and kids.

Her next adventure? A long, schedule-free road trip in their new RV. No timetable and no set destinations. Westbeld and her husband, along with their two German shepherds and one parakeet, plan to take their time visiting as many national parks as they can until they eventually end up back in Texas.

**Charleen Forsman**

A third-generation Anacortes-an and Class of 1978 AHS graduate, Charleen Forsman has been a cook for Anacortes School District for 26 years, in four different schools: Whitney, Island

View, Anacortes High School and Anacortes Middle School. For several years, she also did district laundry at the high school.

Food Nutrition Service Director Paula Lindbo, who worked with Forsman for several years before being her supervisor, said Forsman was always fun to be around.

“She has a loving joyfulness about her and always has a smile to brighten your day. She also makes the best mustard and would give it to us for Christmas every year,” Lindbo said.

Forsman married her high school sweetheart and would do it again, she says. They are looking forward to spending time traveling and hanging out with friends and family, particularly their

grandchildren. She might even revisit her childhood passion; Forsman grew up raising, riding and competing with horses.

When she looks back at her decades in school kitchens, Forsman fondly remembers her youngest students losing teeth during lunch and coming to her for help. She also received many live bugs and other “treasures” from students who sought her help finding a cup to serve as a home. One of her favorite memories involves a young kindergartner looking up and telling her she was “so beautiful” as she served him lunch.

She will miss her coworkers, but Forsman says the absolute best part of her job was interacting with the kids.



Charleen Forsman has worked in four Anacortes schools across 26 years as a valued cook and all-around fun co-worker to her colleagues.

**ASF awards 149 scholarships**



The Anacortes Schools Foundation awarded 149 scholarships and \$356,292 on June 5, 2023 at a ceremony held in Brodriak Hall. 106 high school seniors and 28 current college students received awards. ASF has given more than \$3.3 million and 1,715 individual awards since 1982. Scholarships range from \$500 to \$20,000 and are funded by generous individuals, businesses, organizations and service clubs.


**2023-24 Dates**

The calendar for next year is available now!

**Back to School Dates:**

- Aug. 19: Ready to Learn Fair – 9 a.m. – noon at AHS
- Aug. 24: AMS Hawk Startup
- Aug. 24-25: AHS Seahawk Startup
- Aug. 31: Elementary Meet & Greets – 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, Sept 6: First Day of School (1st-12th grades)
- Sept 11: First Kindergarten & Pre-K Day

The full calendar, is posted on our website: [www.asd103.org](http://www.asd103.org)





ALUMNI PROFILE

Jack Ballard reflects on a winding road

1978 AHS graduate worked in engineering, music, teaching, writing and more

Jack Ballard, PhD, class of 1978, lives and works in an undisclosed country in the Middle East. How he got there starts with chemical engineering, winds through teaching, producing and conducting music, and ends with freelance writing. Here's his fascinating tale:

What does your post-high school education path look like?

I began at Skagit Valley College as a chemical engineering major. I had a choice that summer to go with a professional touring band or accept a position with Edmond CC Soundsation. Since the former was equivocal, I selected education. I then went to Western Washington University, but chose for the same reason to finish out at Central Washington University with a major in music education. For a while, I worked as a substitute teacher all over Skagit County, then took an opportunity in Portland, Ore. to work part time and concentrate on professional music and recording, doing freelance projects and teaching as an adjunct. After working as a graduate assistant at Eastern Washington University, I earned my MM in composition and conducting. Here I got to work with composer Gunther Schuller, who is known for fusing jazz and classical, an area I was very much into.

What about your career? Did you go directly into

the job you're doing now after graduate school?

Absolutely not. I freelanced some and worked as an adjunct professor at Bellevue CC, again teaching in piano, and vocal jazz. I also performed with a small professional ensemble around the Seattle area. Then I received an offer as a tenure track professor at Greenville College in Illinois, where I worked with several students who went on to be professional, some Grammy winners and nominees. I worked a lot at this point in the music industry and was involved as arranger, assistant producer and conductor/keys for my first nationally released project.

But I missed the west, so I moved back to my native Colorado and did media work for a church in Colorado Springs. I also spent two years working at a conference center in Estes Park, leading rock climbing, hikes and experiential education programs. This was also where I met my wife. The next several years consisted of teaching at the college level, freelance writing, working as studio manager producing albums and engineering, and also volunteering with Search and Rescue in the mountains of Colorado. Then another 18 years at Malone University in Ohio, where I was director of music production and designing curriculum and the initial accreditation by National Association of Schools of Music (NASM).

How did you end up in the Middle East?

In 2012, I received a Fulbright Scholarship to work for a semester in Kenya, researching African folk and popular

music, and teaching at Daystar University. At this point our whole family got "the bug" for overseas travel. We were about to be empty nesters, and my wife connected with a "headhunter" group that sought to fill health positions in various nations. Our goal has been to facilitate health care systems and practices with her nurse practitioner degree and the company eventually found an opportunity in the Middle East.

What are you doing now?

I am freelancing (again!), teaching keyboard privately. I was recently published by a company and have concentrated more on writing novels as well as consistently writing music of all styles. And my wife Lori is the first Department of Health nurse practitioner licensed in the country and has been tasked by DOH to design "scope of practice" policy for credentialing and higher education NP licensing.

Did you always know you wanted to be in the music industry?

Pretty much. My interests are extremely diverse, but they have always been arts-oriented in various media. I have enjoyed teaching. In particular, I have integrated multiple media, global cultures and my outdoors/SAR interests. My dream is to set up an arts institution that helps professionals in their goals and ethos in a team



Jack Ballard's post-AHS life includes numerous professions in a variety of different fields.

building, retreat and education atmosphere.

I initially wanted to work in geophysics (especially meteorology) but couldn't find the information from any advisor/parent/school, so I went with chemical engineering. That decision was based on a field trip in HS to the cracking plant. People ask me how it was possible for me to go from geophysics to music. It makes sense when you consider my research in the area is on acoustics and music theory and harmonic resonances. I have designed and worked in recording studios and consulted in acoustic treatment. And one project was on the integral nature of Arabian mathematics, astrophysics and music.

What do you love about your job?

When something "works."

In teaching, that's when the "light bulb comes on" in a student that finally understands. In the music industry, I particularly enjoy when I have a vision, and the long hours of planning, writing, arranging come together in a recording session and suddenly the live musicians give that organic quality to what had only been in your mind.

What teachers encouraged and supported your learning?

Bob Knorr. In particular, he introduced me to vocal jazz, which influenced my pop, jazz and even classical choral writing. He has been a personal friend ever since I graduated.

What advice would you give to graduating seniors?

For one thing, don't EVER train for a job just for the money. I believe burnout happens when someone doesn't enjoy the work. If you enjoy your work, it will also be of better quality and you will be spoken of well by your colleagues. Also, don't ever downplay the value of work ethic. By "work ethic," I mean simply showing up for work because you committed to do so to, in spite of not wanting to. I believe this is probably the most valuable part of working a part-time fast food (for example) job to begin with. If you learn that, it will go a long way in your eventual career.

For more information about Ballard and his career, visit [www.kiwibirdcreativeservices.com](http://www.kiwibirdcreativeservices.com).

# Anacortes Pride

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GREEN CLUB  
FROM PAGE 1

an all-day field trip working in concert with Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve Citizens Stewardship Committee (FBARCSC) to conduct an intertidal survey. The survey documents the status of the biota in the area where the bay meets the land between high and low tides. FBARCSC has been partnering with Green Club since intertidal monitoring began in 2013.

Former FBARCSC vice president and current committee member Wayne Huseby says the club's involvement is invaluable and the group loves working with the high school students.

"It's a symbiotic relationship in that the students get real hands-on science and our group gets enthusiastic help with data collection," Huseby said.

The club's mission includes a strong education component, particularly around recycling. But they also want to encourage their fellow students to carpool and are partnering with the Equity Council to lobby for a SKAT bus stop near the front of

the school. Green Club member Tessa Shainin is excited about the work that's been done and the club's goals, one of which is to establish a collaboration with the Samish DNR to have important conversations about the local land.

"We're about more than just planting native plants on school grounds. Although that's important," she said. "Our projects create real change. Sometimes it's hard to make change as a young person, and I guess that's why I like Green Club so much. It's rewarding that our work has tangible outcomes."

One longstanding project is the wood duck nest boxes, built 12 years ago by the high school woodshop class and placed around the island. Each year, Green Club refurbishes the bedding to ensure success. Garcia said hundreds of wood ducklings have hatched over the years as a result.

Whether it's trail maintenance, tree planting, habitat restoration, or building rain



Green Club advisor Victor Garcia works with students MJ Anderson and Michelle Bethke. Garcia credits the Green Club with inspiring students to care about their community and work to make positive change.

gardens, the club is determined to make the community clean and green. Recently, officers applied for a few grants to fund an \$8,000 aquaponics project. They are also working on a clothing swap to encourage mindfulness around fast fashion, the ever growing industry of quickly designed, cheaply created clothing.

Officers Brittany Brenner and Tayah Lieu both love making a difference. Brenner's favorite projects include planting trees and bag sewing (an annual fundraiser). Lieu finds rewards in all the projects.

"I like the volunteering aspect. It feels great to come together and help get things done," Lieu said.

Most Green Club projects require some cost whether it's transportation, substitute teachers or supplies, so the club holds several fundraisers throughout the year. To donate directly, contact Victor Garcia at [vgarcia@asd103.org](mailto:vgarcia@asd103.org).

"Sometimes it's hard to make change as a young person, and I guess that's why I like Green Club so much. It's rewarding that our work has tangible outcomes."

— Tessa Shainin, Green Club member